GEOGRAPHIC SCHOOL BULLETINS

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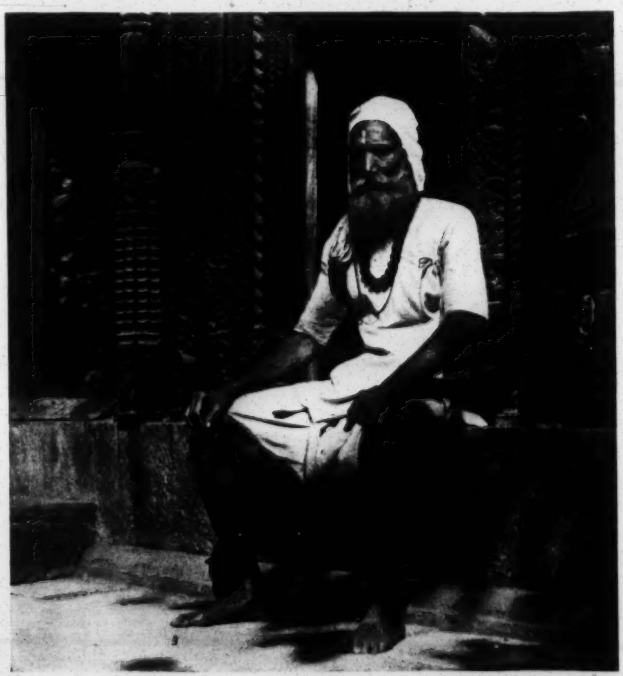
Contents for Week of April 20, 1942. Vol. XXI. No. 8.

1. The Varied Peoples of India
2. New Defense Service Across Mexican Isthmus of Tehuantepec
3. U. S. Has Surpassed Germany in Commerce with Russia
4. Teakettles Sing Around the World in Spite of War
5. Geo-Graphic Brevities



Maynard Owen Williams

HE SYMBOLIZES HINDUSTAN ON GUARD

This old temple attendant has stood guard for twenty years or more at Benares, in northeastern India—one of the Seven Sacred Cities of the Hindus. A million pilgrims a year visit it, especially during eclipses. For three miles the Ganges is lined with ancient shrines, including one to the goddess of smallpox. Religious differences are among the obstacles to unity in India (Bulletin No. 1).

HOW TEACHERS MAY OBTAIN THE BULLETINS

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General Headquarters, Washington, D. C.

The Varied Peoples of India

THE crucial problem of India's relation to the British Empire, which brought Sir Stafford Cripps to New Delhi while the Japanese hammered at India's portals, had to be considered in the light of ages-old internal troubles of India's polyglot peoples.

India had not been disloyal to Britain in the Empire's hour of need. She had raised over a million soldiers, and sent 300,000 of them overseas to fight in Libia, in Hong Kong, and at Singapore. She had built up a large war industry.

One-Sixth of People on Earth Are in India

But many obstacles stood in the way of both internal harmony and settlement of the "Indian independence" issue. Crowded into the confines of India are one-sixth of all the people on earth, divided among many races, speaking 220 languages, paying homage to a dozen religions. While large parts of India are governed directly by the British Crown, there any many semi-feudal native states ruled by their own princes, subject only indirectly to the British King-Emperor.

An idea of the magnitude of the problem can be gained by imagining the difficulties the 13 American colonies would have had to deal with in seeking independence if: (1) they had had 389 million people (India's newest census count) in an area little larger than half the present United States; (2) instead of a common tongue, the people had spoken 220 languages, and scarcely 10 per cent could read; (3) instead of mild religious differences among Christians, there had been two dominant, dissimilar religions with a rivalry embittered by a millennium of struggle; and (4) instead of the 13 colonies, there had been 11 alien-ruled provinces and 583 states under native princes.

Hindu Versus Moslem for Centuries

Ninety million Moslems and three times that number of Hindus make up the bulk of India's millions. These two faiths have been at odds since the first Islamic invasion, in the 11th century. The Moslem worships but one god; the Hindu many (illustration, cover). The orthodox Hindu, considering the cow sacred, resents the Moslem's eating beef.

The All-India Congress Party, dominated by Hindus but containing some Moslems, proposes to seat members of these two faiths in a united-India parliament. The Moslem League, likewise seeking independence, advocates a separate state for Moslems, to be called Pakistan, distinct from Hindu India.

In addition to Moslems and Hindus, there are many minor religious groups. The Jains (illustration, inside cover) form a Hindu dissenter class known for its *yatis*, or holy men, who will kill no living thing. The Jain monk wears a veil over his mouth to keep from breathing in insects. The Sikhs likewise are Hindu dissenters. The bearded Sikh policemen have served in many parts of the Empire.

A small group of Parsees, remnants of Persia's Zoroastrians, are settled on India's west coast, where they have become wealthy and influential. The Parsees still expose their dead to the vultures at the Towers of Silence. The Buddhist faith, declining in India, its birthplace, has 12,000,000 followers in near-by Burma.

Animist beliefs, involving worship of spirits and the manifestations of Nature, are still professed by primitive tribes in the hills and jungles of south and central India. There are six to seven million Indian Christians.

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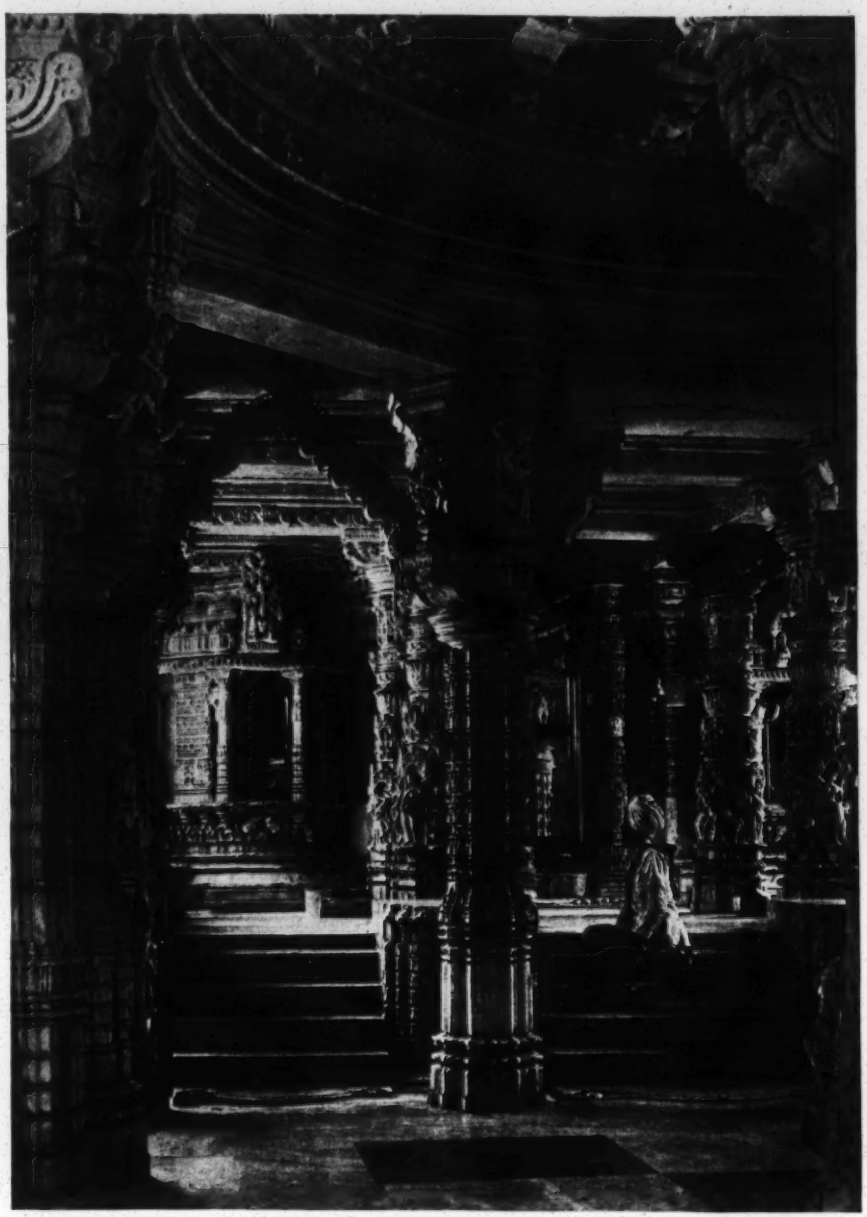

Herbert G. Ponting

"STONE LACE" OF CARVED MARBLE ADORNS THE JAIN TEMPLES OF MOUNT ABU

The famous cluster of the half-dozen Dilwara temples, some of the finest dating back to the 13th century A. D., tops Mount Abu in Rajputana with superb examples of the patient labor inspired by the Jain religion, a dissenting branch of the Hindu faith. Each temple, in a mango grove, has courtyards and pillared halls where the devout kneel. A special feature is a line of 52 carved cells for the 52 Jinas revered by the Jains. Each cell, enclosed so that no light enters except by the door, contains the seated image of a cross-legged Jina. The Jains' beliefs set them apart from the Hindus, Moslems, and other groups making up the complex patchwork of peoples which is India (Bulletin No. 1).

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New Defense Service Across Mexican Isthmus of Tehuantepec

THE visit to Washington of Mexico's Foreign Minister, Dr. Ezequiel Padilla, hailed as a gesture of international solidarity, served as a reminder that Mexico is cooperating with the United States on measures for joint defense of the two nations. One aspect of their defense, the problem of transportation, is being served by rehabilitation of the hitherto little-used "transcontinental" railway across Mexico's Isthmus of Tehuantepec.

In the United States a "transcontinental" route may be 3,000 miles long. In Mexico the between-oceans mileage may be one-fifteenth that distance.

"Go South to Get West" as in Panama

Like the Isthmus of Panama, Tehuantepec offers a short cut between the Atlantic and the Pacific. The Tehuantepec Isthmus, however, at its narrowest, between the Bay of Campeche on the Gulf of Mexico and the Tehuantepec Gulf on the Pacific side, is about 120 miles across; the Panama Isthmus is less than 40 miles wide. The immediate value of the longer Tehuantepec route is for an auxiliary line or an alternate to the Panama Canal in case of emergency.

Also like the Isthmus of Panama, curiously enough, Tehuantepec offers a north-south short cut between the eastern and western oceans. By a coincidence of geography, both routes cut through "twists" in the great mid-American isthmus, where a sidewise swerve from its north-south axis puts the Atlantic on the north and the Pacific on the south.

The Tehuantepec railroad runs from Quetzalcoalco (Puerto Mexico) on the swampy, jungle-covered Atlantic side, over the Sierra Madre mountain backbone of the isthmus at the relatively low altitude of 735 feet, and southward to the port of Salina Cruz on the Pacific. Its length totals 192 miles. The ports at both ends have extensive harbor facilities, recently fallen into disuse, which are scheduled for improvement along with the railroad. The line makes a junction with the railroad running to Mexico City, 311 miles to the northwest, and with the international railroad to Guatemala.

Proposal to Carry Ships Across by Rail

The idea of an inter-ocean route across the Isthmus of Tehuantepec is more than 400 years old. Tehuantepec Indians before the coming of the Spaniards followed a short cut along the Coatzacoalcos, or Winding Snake, River, the largest stream of the isthmus. Cortés dropped anchor on the Gulf of Mexico side in the 1520's and dreamed of a ship canal to the Pacific.

When Mexico became independent of Spain, she began negotiating for the building of a transport line, either a ship canal or one of the newly invented railways. In 1853 the United States obtained treaty rights, in force until 1937, for special transportation privileges across the isthmus for mail and passengers, including the courtesy of travel without passport. Interest of the United States was stimulated by the gold rush in California and the pioneer development of Oregon, as American gold hunters and homestead seekers from the East avoided the U. S. overland route by struggling over the Tehuantepec Isthmus as a short cut between boat rides. They crossed the isthmus in canoe and on foot.

In the meantime, the American Captain James B. Eads, famous for bridging the Mississippi, suggested building not a ship canal but a ship-railway, which

UMI

A peculiarly difficult problem is presented by the 50,000,000 "untouchables" or depressed classes. While classified as Hindus, they are forbidden access to Hindu temples and are relegated to menial occupations and to slum quarters, though the impact of Western ideas has improved their hard lot somewhat. They have organized a political group of their own.

The peoples of India may be divided roughly into the Dravidians, represented now by the Tamils of the south and by the hill and jungle tribes; descendants of the "Aryan" race that came through the Himalaya passes some 3,000 years ago; descendants of the Moslem invaders, frequently referred to as Pathans; the Mongol and Tibetan types found chiefly on the northern and eastern frontiers. India's many languages are derived mostly from the Sanskrit, Dravidian, and Tibeto-Chinese. English is spoken widely by the Indian upper classes.

Politically, 93,000,000 Indians are subjects of some 580 rajas, maharajas, nizams, and gaekwars, who are responsible in various degrees to the British Crown. The demand for independence is voiced most loudly in British India—the 11 provinces which surround the princes' fiefs in a political crazy quilt. Some 296,000,000 Indians in the British provinces are ruled by British governors, who are answerable to the Viceroy at New Delhi. The ballot, restricted by literacy, property-owning and tax-paying conditions, is confined to a few millions.

Note. For additional information on India, see the following articles in the *National Geographic Magazine:* "In the Realms of the Maharajas," December, 1940; and "First over the Roof of the World by Motor," March, 1932; and the following GEOGRAPHIC SCHOOL BULLETINS: "The India Road to China, a Burma Road Substitute," March 16, 1942; "India, a War Chest of the British Empire," December 15, 1941.

India may be located on the National Geographic Society's Map of Asia. A price list of maps may be obtained from the Society's headquarters in Washington, D. C.

Bulletin No. 1, April 20, 1942.

Bourne and Shepherd

INDIA'S CHIEF CITY, SECOND IN THE EMPIRE, IS NAMED FOR A GODDESS

With about a million and a half inhabitants, the majority of them Hindus, Calcutta ranks next to London as the British Empire's second largest city. Its name comes from Kalighat (above), a Hindu temple sacred to a finger of Kali, the goddess-wife of the god Siva. Kali, the repulsive goddess of destruction, demands sacrifices, and young lambs are killed in her honor. Visitors to the 300-year-old temple bathe in the waters beside it for added sanctity.

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U. S. Has Surpassed Germany in Commerce with Russia

NAVAL and air battles in the spring snowstorms of the Arctic were listed among the adventures of a big British-American convoy which "got through" to Russia early this month. The desperate German effort to stop United Nations war supplies to Russia is a reminder of the trade relations among these countries before the war broke out.

In spite of the historic Russo-German trade pact of 1939, in effect when the German invasion of Russia began, the United States apparently has been transacting more business with the U. S. S. R. since 1936 than Germany has. Before the war, Russia was selling Uncle Sam vital manganese ore and platinum in exchange for oil-refinery equipment, warm furs and asbestos in exchange for brass and copper.

This Russo-American commerce, founded largely on fur and metals, had grown in 1937 to give the United States first place as a source of Soviet imports. From 1936 through the first half of 1939, both Great Britain and the United States surpassed Germany in buying Russian exports. The scant data available about Russo-German trade since then, from the signing of the 1939 trade pact until Germany invaded Russia, has been interpreted by United States trade experts to indicate that the German anticipation of increased shipments from Russia was not realized. In fact, during 1940 the U. S. S. R. purchased in the United States many manufactures previously obtained from Germany—pipe for oil pipe lines, for instance. The total U. S.-U. S. S. R. commerce that year exceeded $100,000,000 in value, a 50 per cent increase over 1939. The United States had a favorable trade balance, selling four times as much as it bought.

U. S. Needs Russian Manganese and Platinum

For high grade manganese, one of the key metals in the U. S. defense program, Russia has been the chief source of American imports. On an average, every ton of common steel requires about 14 pounds of manganese. More than a third of the manganese ore purchased abroad in the past has reached the United States from the Chiaturi deposits in Soviet Georgia, normally traveling by way of the Black Sea and the Dardanelles.

The largest platinum nugget on record, weighing 21 pounds, was found in 1843 in Russia. Now the Soviet Union is a possible source of the United States' needs of this precious metal (illustration, next page) for its industrial and wartime uses, in making nitric and sulphuric acids, synthetic fertilizer, laboratory instruments, and particularly the high-tension magnetos for airplanes.

Nearly all the "Persian" lamb imported into the United States for fur coats hails from Russia. None of it comes from Persia. Most of it originates east of the Caspian Sea, south of the desert of Kyzyl Kum, in the Uzbek S. S. Republic. This curly black fleece from the newborn lambs of Karakul sheep, popularized in Europe by the dashing Cossacks' fur hats, is an outstanding peacetime United States import from the U. S. S. R., amounting to $5,000,000 a year.

Furs make up more than half of American imports from Russia. The snowy

Soviet Russia will be the subject of the Smithsonian Institution radio program, "The World Is Yours," on Sunday, May 3, at 1:30 Eastern War Time, on the Red Network of the National Broadcasting Company.

UMI

would transport ships and their cargoes overland by rail between the oceans. It was not until 1899 that work was finally begun by the Mexican Government itself on a railway across the isthmus. Opened in 1907, the Tehuantepec line was a thriving enterprise for a time, with forty trains a day. The completion in 1914 of the Panama Canal to the south, however, offered such competition that the railway gradually lost its importance.

The primitive Tehuantepec "Garden of Eden" will be affected not only by railway improvements but by the great Pan American Highway running southward from the Mexican-United States border, which will cross the Tehuantepec railway at a point not far from the Pacific.

Note: For further information on Tehuantepec, see the following articles in the *National Geographic Magazine:* "Great Stone Faces of the Mexican Jungle," and "On the Cortés Trail," September, 1940; and "The Isthmus of Tehuantepec," May, 1924.

The Isthmus of Tehuantepec may be studied on the National Geographic Society's Map of Mexico, Central America, and the West Indies.

Bulletin No. 2, April 20, 1942.

Clifton Adams

HALF A GOURD IS BETTER THAN A SHOPPING BAG IN TEHUANTEPEC

The town of Tehuantepec, on the railroad 21 miles inland from Salina Cruz on the Pacific coast of the Tehuantepec Isthmus, is a market center for the Tehuana Indians, whose name is reflected in that of the town and the isthmus as well. The women, wearing loose blouses and ruffled skirts tucked sarong-style around their waists, have the convenient skill of carrying head burdens gracefully. They use a half-gourd, possibly two feet in diameter, cut so that its weight balances regardless of the shape; it is painted in bright flower designs. Most of the containers are made by artisans of the near-by hill town of Santa Maria de Guiniagate. On her way to market, the señora may carry a baby in the gourd on her head. The baby may have to walk home, for the mother will have filled the gourd with a miscellaneous burden chosen from market displays of chickens, iguanas, pineapples, oranges, lemons, and mangoes.

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Teakettles Sing Around the World in Spite of War

THERE need not be tempests in American teapots if governmental measures for conservation are observed. The recent order halving deliveries of tea to retail stores is expected to encourage a careful use of the supply already in the U. S., calculated to be enough for a year. Meanwhile, ships carrying ammunition and war supplies to the Orient will bring back tea on their return trips.

The average man in the U. S. uses only 11 or 12 ounces a year, but when he joins the Army or Navy his tea appetite rises. The Army needs 1.6 pounds a year per man, the Navy 1.8. In summer and in the tropics, iced tea is a Navy staple; the Army needs hot tea for troops in cold climates, such as Iceland and Alaska.

Brewed with Sugar on Sahara, Salted in Mongolia

Tea imported to the U. S. in 1941 amounted to 107,000,000 pounds, an increase of 7,000,000 pounds over 1940. In recent years imports have increased 3,000,000 pounds annually. The U. S. has been receiving tea from India and Ceylon (43 per cent on the average), somewhat less from Java and Sumatra (37 per cent), and about a fifth from Japan and Japanese-dominated territory. Nearly 90 per cent imported is "black," or prepared by a process allowing a slight fermentation. Green tea, hitherto imported chiefly from Japanese sources, is unfermented.

Tea is a favored drink throughout the world from the snow-buried homes of Eskimos to the hot Sahara sands, as the annual consumption of nearly a billion pounds indicates. It varies greatly in different countries because of local brewing processes and the addition of flavoring. Jasmine flowers flavor the finer grades in parts of China. Tibetans mix butter in their tea, and Mongols may add salt.

Tea is a stand-by of desert travelers. The Bedouin makes a potent black brew from a handful of tea and great lumps of sugar boiled in a pint of water, serving the bitter-sweet liquid hot in tiny glasses. Tea-drinking has spread over northern Africa from Morocco, in the past fifty years. The Arabs add mint to green tea.

British in 300 Years Became Chief Tea-Drinkers

Tea antedates history, but is commonly considered a native of China. In many poor Chinese villages, however, tea is rare. In the mountainous regions peasants have brewed "tea" from the leaves of willow or crab-apple. The tea scarcity there results partly from the cost of transportation. A caravan of possibly 800 yaks may spend 30 days carrying tea from the Min River valley, where a bale of 120 pounds may cost $3, to Kwanhsien, where it sells for $30 to $40 a bale.

Much tea has been carried by camels; it is brought on the backs of men for hundreds of miles at the rate of six miles a day to more inaccessible parts of Tibet. A man carries about 300 pounds; a camel, only 350. In Tibet, Mongolia, Siberia, and Turkistan, tea appears in the shape of bricks, pressed from tea dust.

This BULLETIN supplies information for use with Unit I (II, F, 1. Scarcity and increased price of food, shelter, clothing), in the U. S. Office of Education handbook, "What the War Means to Us." A limited number of additional copies of this BULLETIN can be supplied.

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expanses of Siberia yield an abundance of fox fur of Arctic white and the royal pelt of ermine (the white weasel), as well as squirrel fur of steel-blue cast. Of these furs the U. S. S. R. is the world's leading exporter.

Licorice root, used to flavor candy and tobacco and to disguise the taste of medicines; some belladonna, and tragacanth gum, which goes into the production of paintings and pills, are among the less vital U. S. imports from the U. S. S. R. Other items include caraway seeds and flax, asbestos and dandelion roots.

In return, the U. S. S. R. buys from the U. S. quantities of supplies such as wheat and gasoline for Siberian settlements, since Pacific shipping is more convenient and less expensive than the long haul over the Trans-Siberian Railway. The bulk of the imports, however, feeds Soviet industry, with oil-well and steel-mill equipment, machine tools, engines, and other manufactures.

Note: For information about how metals from Russia and elsewhere serve the U. S. in war, see the April, 1942, *National Geographic Magazine* for "Metal Sinews of Strength." See also the following GEOGRAPHIC SCHOOL BULLETINS: "Gateways to Russia for U. S. Aid," November 17, 1941; "Russia's Ukraine Holds Grain and Mineral Riches," October 12, 1941; and "Soviet Union, Giant Among Nations," October 6, 1941.

European Russia and its ports are shown on the National Geographic Society's Map of Europe and the Near East; the Society's Map of the World shows Asiatic Russia.

Bulletin No. 3, April 20, 1942.

William R. Culver

RUSSIA AND COLOMBIA HAVE PRODUCED PLATINUM BY THE POUND

Since 1935, the U. S. S. R. has held third place in world production of platinum metals (after Canada and Colombia), with an annual output estimated around 100,000 ounces. The U. S. produced about 1,160 ounces in 1939, and brought nearly 34,000 ounces from Alaska. Treasured at the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, D. C., are these chunks of platinum, that from Russia (foreground) weighing 1¼ pounds and that from Colombia 1½. (The smaller bit of alloy to the right is one of the several other precious metals of the platinum family.) Although most familiar in jewelry, platinum has important functions in such instruments as direction indicators, voltage regulators, and precision resistance thermometers, as well as in magneto contacts and spark-plug electrodes. During the last World War, the U. S. obtained a large shipment of the metal secretly from Russia to meet war needs, but there are indications that this war has not caught the U. S. so short on platinum supplies. In 1939 nearly 20,000 ounces reached this country from Russia; larger quantities arrived from Colombia and Canada. Recently more than half of Russia's platinum exports have been going to England.

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Geo-Graphic Brevities

RIOM, A MEDIEVAL SETTING FOR FRENCH WAR-GUILT TRIALS

GUILTY or not guilty is an old, old story in the ancient French town of Riom, where the sensational "war-guilt" trial of defeated French Republic officials has recently been suspended.

A quiet town 21 miles southwest of France's temporary capital at Vichy, Riom has been the judicial center of this region since the Middle Ages. With some 10,000 inhabitants and minor industries producing tobacco and fruit pastes, the town is overshadowed today by the booming industrial city of Clermont-Ferrand, 8 miles away, as well as by Vichy. But centuries before they had any importance, Riom was capital of France's central duchy, Auvergne. After the downfall of the dukes, the provincial law court survived.

Within its enclosing oval of tree-shaded boulevards, Riom is a dozen squares long and a half-dozen wide, on the bank of the Ambene River. Caesar's Roman legions found there the Gallic town of Ricomum, whose name evolved to Riom.

The Court House, or Palais de Justice, includes all that remains of the sumptuous ducal palace of Duke Jean de Berry, built about 1380 by architects fresh from working on the Louvre in Paris. The richly sculptured 16th century Town Hall preserves a letter from Joan of Arc, demanding funds from Riom to support her army's defense of France against the English. A half-dozen of the town's short, quiet streets are outdoor museums of Gothic and Renaissance architecture.

* * * * *

JAPAN NOW CONTROLS THE ORIENT'S EXPORT RICE

JAPAN'S invasion of Burma, Thailand, and French Indo-China has revealed how much the Orient depended for food on these countries, the only exporters of rice in quantity.

Rice, the staple food for more than half of mankind, rivals wheat as humanity's daily bread. Also, rice produces sake, a beer, the beverage of millions of Orientals. About 85 per cent of the world's rice grows in Asia. China produces the greatest amount, estimated at about 30 million tons annually, but not enough for her own millions of people.

Rangoon, Burma's capital, before the war was the world's leading rice port. It built the largest rice elevators in the world, annually shipping some 3,000,000 tons. French Indo-China in 1939 exported 1,692,000 tons of rice, less than a third of its total crop. Rice-and-curry is the country's favorite food, with fish sauce.

Thailand (Siam) normally produces about 4,500,000 tons of rice each year, but of this less than a million tons is a surplus for export. At Bangkok, some 80 rice mills face the river front.

Most of the Thais devote their lives to the cultivation of rice. The grain forms their main diet (illustration, next page). They also make crisp rice cakes, and prepare rice as a candy, "popped" and covered with palm sugar.

Chief among the customers of these rice-exporting nations was China. The Philippines likewise relied on outside sources. Half of Java's cultivated land was in rice, but the island had to import. Japan has hitherto imported most of its rice from Formosa and Korea. In Japan, rice is the leading food; about 90,000 tons are consumed each day.

UMI

These bricks have also been used as money, marked in segments to break off in making change.

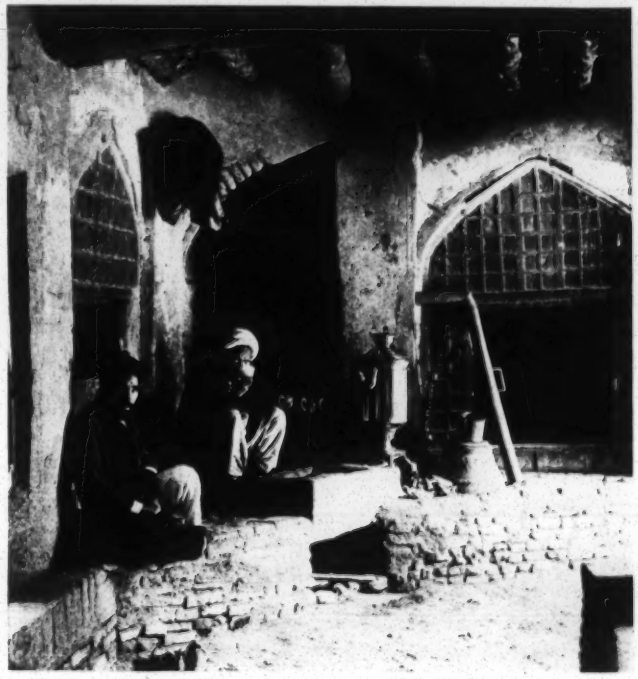
Great Britain heads the list of tea-drinkers, consuming about four times as much as the U. S. In Queen Elizabeth's day, however, the beverage was still unknown there. Now tea is served in many business offices.

The great tea industry of India and Ceylon began about a century ago, and soon surpassed the industry in China. Unlike China, India's tea is so plentiful and cheap that the poorest can now afford the drink once enjoyed only by nobles.

After experiments beginning some sixty years ago, a 100-acre tea farm was established in South Carolina, which one year produced 4,500 pounds of tea. Another farm was started in Texas. Production costs prevented competition with imported tea and the projects were abandoned. No tea is now grown commercially in the U. S.

Before World War I, Russian consumption of tea increased enormously after Nicholas II ended the manufacture of vodka. Russians rose to second place as tea-drinkers. Tea is the favorite drink in Afghanistan, where an afternoon visitor can hardly escape before imbibing four or five "cups," big Russian glasses. The Portuguese have long been a tea-drinking nation, importing from their territories in India and China—Goa and Macau—and from the near-by Azores.

Bulletin No. 4, April 20, 1942.



Maynard Owen Williams

AFGHAN CHAI-KHANAS HAVE TEA TO SIP OR "TO GO OUT"

The Afghan *chai-khana*, or tea house, in a corner of the bazaar, is popular among turbaned tea-sippers who remove their shoes, sit down, and enjoy a steaming cup on the spot. But there is also a flourishing trade in tea "to go out," delivered on trays to near-by shops, business offices, inns, or homes. The tall Russian samovar (right of center) keeps the water hot. An individual serving of tea is brewed in one of the small blue china teapots from Japan, arrayed in the shadowy alcove (background). The strong tea favored in Afghanistan may have the added fillip of cardamom flavoring.

TORRES STRAIT ISLANDS, FROM CANNIBALISM TO CHRISTIANITY

LYING between Australia and New Guinea, the Torres Strait Islands shared with their neighbors the attack by Japanese bombers. In these enlightened islands of the South Seas, the natives pay income tax, enjoy social security, and encourage woman suffrage. Cannibals 50 years ago, their grass huts hung with human skulls, today they are devout Christians living in modern bungalows.

Ten of the islands were set aside by Australian authorities as reserves for the 4,000 natives. The white man, who despoiled so much of the South Seas, is forbidden to enter. The islands are self-governing except in external affairs. Every resident over 18 is entitled to vote. The lawmakers wear uniforms, consisting of gray trousers, a Panama hat, and a red jersey embroidered with the word "Councillor." An income tax of 5 per cent finances the communities, taking care of the sick and those too old to work. Approximately 1,400 school children study English, boatbuilding, seamanship, horticulture, and domestic science.

Torres Strait—a 100-mile network of dangerous channels separating granite islands, extinct volcanoes, and coral reefs—covers the ancient sunken land bridge from Australia to New Guinea. Thursday Island is the Strait Islands' administrative capital. It is surrounded by seven islands named Horn, Goode, Hammond, Prince of Wales, Tuesday, Wednesday, and Friday. The latter were named by Captain James Cook, who was fond of commemorating discovery days. The Japanese settlement on Thursday Island is called Yokohama.

Bulletin No. 5, April 20, 1942.

W. Robert Moore

THE THAILAND STAFF OF LIFE IS DAILY RICE FOR MAN AND BEAST

Educated in the Buddhist tradition that it is sinful to kill even animals and fish, the poorest Thai families have been taught to content themselves with meat, chicken, or eggs not more than twice a month, with fish somewhat more frequently. This inadequate diet has resulted, in some sections, in occasional banqueting on roasted spiders, giant water bugs, and lizards. The daily staple, therefore, is rice, often cooked in coconut milk; even domestic animals receive rice rations. A family dinner, spread on the floor, consists of baskets of sticky rice and a central tray holding dishes of curries, peppery sauces, sometimes dried fish, and whatever vegetables or fruit the family can afford. In the photograph, the father is teaching the youngest child how to press rice into a wad and dip it into a sauce. Rice, the chief cause of Thailand's ancient wars and modern lawsuits, was once the basis of nobility.

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